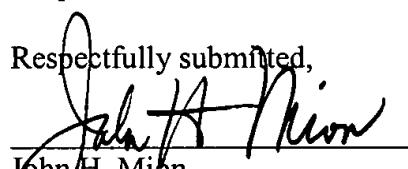


PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
PCT/BE99/00084, FILED JULY 2, 1999

REMARKS

The above amendments have been made to eliminate all multiple dependent claims (both proper and improper), thereby both ensuring examination of all claims on the merits in the first Office Action and eliminating the need for a multiple dependent claim fee.

Respectfully submitted,


John H. Mion

Registration No. 18,879

SUGHRUE, MION, ZINN,
MACPEAK & SEAS, PLLC
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037-3202
(202) 293-7060
June 21, 2001

SEARCHED
INDEXED
MAILED
FILED
JUN 21 2001
U.S. PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
PCT/BE99/00084, FILED JULY 2, 1999

APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKING TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are amended as follows:

5. (Amended) The process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~claim 1, characterized in that it furthermore comprises particle size selection by sieving (32) of the granulated UO₂ before it is used.

8. (Amended) The process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~claim 1, characterized in that, for said granulation of the non-free-flowing UO₂, a lubricant is added to it.

9. (Amended) The process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~claim 1, characterized in that, for said granulation of the non-free-flowing UO₂, a binder is added to it.

10. (Amended) The process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 9~~claim 1, characterized in that the sintering (7) of the fuel pellets in an atmosphere of argon and hydrogen is carried out at a temperature between 1600 and 1760°C, the argon possibly being replaced with nitrogen.

11. (Amended) The process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 10~~claim 1, characterized in that, during the sintering (7), the oxygen partial pressure is adjusted, preferably by adjusting the H₂/H₂O ratio in ~~the~~a flushing gas, in order to improve the interdiffusion of the PuO₂ and UO₂ oxides.